[163 cont.]
631 government with the functions of an administrator, with the title
648 of "t'ou-sseu" (administrator of barbarian country). This personage has retained a certain moral influence over the neighboring Tonkinese regions but naturally has no administrative authority over these populations.

The "Méo" settled in Tonkin are subject to Annamese law and amenable to the various native and European courts. Most of their
[627] differences are adjusted on the spot, according to the special customs of each tribe. When there is truly no means of settling the affair, the case is brought before higher jurisdiction.

[164] The "Méo" greatly dread the European courts, not so
147 much because of the severity of their sentences, but because these
648 courts most frequently sit in the towns situated at low altitude, where the "Méo" are unable to live. It has quite frequently happened to us to have to judge certain "Méo," the importance of whose crimes exceeded our competence. Upon the announcement of their being sent before the court of the resident of Laokay (altitude: 90 meters) the defendants threw themselves at our feet, saying: "Kill me at once, for if you send me to Laokay, I am sure to die there."

The "Méo" family is not united by as strong ties as the fami-
593 lies of the other groups. Here again is found another manifestation
866 of the spirit of independence of the "Méo," who accept no constraint, even that of the paternal authority when it becomes too annoying. Boys and girls are raised at random, without control and without advice, obeying freely the dictates of their will and their instincts. They part company with their family when it pleases them. However, one son always remains in the paternal household to keep up the cultivation of the fields belonging to the family.

769 Ancestral worship, which constitutes elsewhere so strong a family tie, is observed by the "Méo" in the most summary fashion.

Upon the death of the father, it is the mother who remains head
768 of the family and proprietress of the various belongings, real and personal. When the mother dies in her turn, the personal property
[428] (money, utensils, animals, crops) are divided among the male children. The eldest son or that one of the sons who remains settled in the paternal home becomes head of the family and cultivates the